

## **ARLINGTON PARK & RECREATION COMMISSION MEETING MINTUES**

*April 14<sup>th</sup>, 2020*

The Town of Arlington Park and Recreation Commission came to order for its online virtual meeting via Zoom on Tuesday April 14th, 2020 at 7:17pm.

Commission Members: Leslie Mayer, Jen Rothenberg, Shirley Canniff, Phil Lasker, Scott Walker, and associate member, Sarah Carrier were present. Interim Recreation Director Robert Jefferson and Program Supervisor Zachary Vaillette were also in attendance. Ray Dunetz of Ray Dunetz Landscape Architecture was present as an anticipated speaker.

Members of the Public: Beth Melofchik, Don Kalischer, Anthony Vogel, Philip Tedesco, and Elaine Backman were present.

Preliminary Matter: Leslie Mayer, Park & Recreation Commission Chair, took formal attendance via a roll call. Ms. Mayer read a statement pertaining to Governor Baker's Public Meeting Law change due to COVID-19 regarding virtual meetings. Meeting business ground rules and procedures were also covered by Ms. Mayer.

- **Open Forum (Public Comment)**

Beth Melofchik expressed interest in information related to the mountain biking course for Menotomy Rocks Park. Ms. Mayer requested that Ms. Melofchik email Interim Recreation Director Jefferson following the meeting for this information.

- **Lussianno/North Union Playground Update and Plan Review**

Ms. Mayer reported information regarding Lussianno/North Union Playground Project was emailed to Commissioners. Mr. Jefferson stated that Ray Dunetz of Ray Dunetz Landscaping was in attendance to provide additional information and to answer questions with regard to the plan. The design is approximately 90% ready and is currently slightly over budget. Ms. Mayer asked each Commissioner to provide feedback regarding the plan.

Ms. Rothenberg responded being satisfied with the current plan. Ms. Canniff confirmed that the project plan looked good on her end. Mr. Lasker believes that the project is going well and thanked Ray Dunetz for his work so far. Mr. Lasker also expressed that the project should go out to bid soon with the current state of the market in mind.

Mr. Dunetz provided information on alternates such as benches, trash receptacles, trees, etc. in the plan. Mr. Dunetz also reported the current plan uses existing benches, but would be adding a standard 3<sup>rd</sup> support to them, work which would be done by the Town. A solution for the drainage issue on the property would utilize the manhole cover, located near the basketball court, to resolve the problem. Mr. Dunetz also believes that the drainage system needs to be cleaned out, so having it cleaned will be added to the bid specifications.

Mr. Dunetz reported that the original plan had the addition of quite a few trees, which has been lowered in the current plan to approximately (10). This was determined in consultation with the Town Tree Warden. Current trees on the property are well placed and provide an adequate amount of shade. Specifications will be added with regard to Porta-Potties.

Mr. Jefferson stated that alternative items listed on the *North Union Lussianno Playground Project Financials* worksheet would be purchased outside of the bid. Mr. Dunetz has pricing information on these items from companies, such as M.E. O'Brien & Sons.

Mr. Walker reported that he likes the direction the project is headed in terms of its layout and structures, especially the curving footpath from North Union Street.

Ms. Carrier had several questions regarding the placement of items in the plan, such as specific trees, the location of sandbox, and picnic tables. Ms. Mayer stated that changing the locations of items in the plan could have an impact on project pricing. Ms. Carrier stated that she did not believe changing location of these items would affect the project budget and that she still has concerns regarding the placement.

Ms. Carrier suggested that having the sandbox in an alternative location may be more practical for younger children. Ms. Rothenberg responded that the placement of the sandbox in the current plan was determined as they need the item to be both at ground level and handicap accessible. Mr. Dunetz confirmed that the sandbox's location in the plan was done for accessibility purposes. Placing the sandbox in its current planned location will also allow members of the public to go from one play activity to the next with the goal being to put the "play near the play".

It was also reported that the current plan does not have as many toddler swings as originally hoped for. The hope is that the project bids come in lower than expected, which will allow the Town to purchase an additional toddler swing. The current plan has (2) toddler swings and (1) ADA Swing. Mr. Dunetz reported that that the ADA and toddler swings could not be in the same bay per safety guidelines. The working group determined that only (1) ADA Swing was necessary for the park, and the current plan has one and a half bays, featuring the (1) ADA swing and (2) toddler swings.

Ms. Carrier also expressed concerns regarding the placement of picnic tables and swing bays near the entrances to the park, where there will be high foot traffic. Mr. Dunetz agreed to look at placement of picnic tables, which might be possible and if so, it would be a quick change.

Member of the public, Philip Tedesco, thanked all individuals for their work on this project and requested possibly adding locations for future trees to the plan. These locations would only be used for future reference in the event the Town decided to plant additional trees within the park. Ms. Canniff expressed concern about adding the locations of possible future plantings to the design as she believes that the usage of the facility when opened may be different than what is anticipated through the design. Ms. Rothenberg believes possible tree planting locations could be in the design at the discretion of Mr. Dunetz. This should also be done for the location of benches and picnic tables that could possibly be added in future years, which would still require funding and approval for installation. Ms. Rothenberg agreed that usage of the park should be monitored once implemented. Ms. Mayer inquired about Mr. Jefferson's interest in having cement pads poured for picnic table locations. Mr. Jefferson confirmed that having cement pads poured was only at the location of current picnic tables and not possible future locations. Ms. Mayer asked if Ms. Rothenberg would need to see an updated design that incorporated these possible placement locations for trees, benches, and picnic tables before voting on the plan. Ms. Rothenberg stated she would not.

Ms. Carrier questioned the 6" depth of the variegated rubber in the playground design. Mr. Dunetz responded with additional information on the rubber surfacing, stating that not using the manufacture's recommendation of 6" may void the warranty.

Mr. Walker asked for clarification on the alternative list regarding picnic tables. Mr. Dunetz responded that picnic tables would be purchased separately by the Town. The estimated installation cost of these picnic tables is included in the total cost of the project and was determined by taking 30% of the total product cost, which is standard practice.

Ms. Carrier asked if there are still plans to use the climbing tree element currently located behind the Ed Burns Arena. Mr. Dunetz stated that there are no plans to incorporate this into the plan, as the safety area required for the element would require a major redesign.

Ms. Rothenberg asked if the add alts list would be reorganized. Mr. Dunetz responded that the order of the list was based off the working group's recommendation. After some discussion, Mr. Dunetz confirmed the most

up-to-date list for add alts is in the following priority order: picnic tables, trash receptacles, sand box, log scramble, water lines and hoses, boulders, fence, and bike racks.

Ms. Canniff made the motion to approve the Lussianno/North Union Playground Plan. Motion seconded by Ms. Rothenberg. Ms. Mayer asked for a roll call vote of each Commissioner. The Commission voted to move forward with the Lussianno/North Union Playground Plan unanimously, 5-0.

Mr. Dunetz thanked all Commission Members.

- Robbins Farm Update and Suggestions for Field Improvements/Maintenance

Ms. Mayer expressed that there have been numerous concerns regarding the grass at the playing field at Robbins Farm Park. Mr. Lasker stated that he is concerned that several seasons have gone by after the work has been done/facility opened and that the field has still not been used for sports. Mr. Lasker believes that field conditions need to be brought up to the standard intended.

Mr. Jefferson stated that he has reached out to Weston and Sampson via email regarding this issue and that turnover in Town staffing may have had an impact on the issue not being resolved yet. This project was completed approximately (3) years ago and the grass has still not taken. Mr. Jefferson has also contacted Prescription Turf, whom the Town has worked with in the past, although they did not win the bid for fields this year, and he has had discussions with the DPW about possible treatment options. Weston and Sampson will be reaching out to the contractor and other consultants who originally worked on the project and plans to meet Mr. Jefferson at the property so recommendations can be made. There are questions relating to if the turf was improperly installed, however the warranty period is most likely over.

Ms. Canniff asked for clarification regarding the plan to reopen the Robbins Farm field at the end of March, which did not happen, and thoughts on opening the field to the public in the near future if the COVID-19 impacts end. Ms. Canniff stated that she drove by the field several weeks ago and the grass was yellow, but has since been improving in color. Ms. Canniff also asked when the fence around the field would be coming down.

Ms. Mayer proposed tabling the grass discussion until the next meeting to allow more information to be gathered. Mr. Jefferson stated that the current plan is to have the fence come down by the end of April. He also stated that he believes the conditions are improving and the grass is starting to take. Mr. Lasker informed the Commission that it is too early for Blue Grass to be in top condition, as this type of grass usually greens up in late April or early May. Mr. Lasker supported the plan to bring in Cataldo Landscaping and Tom Irwin to look at the root development of the grass. He also stated that Dennis Brolin would be an individual we could contact on the matter. Mr. Lasker referenced that Robbins Farm has a unique soil structure, which needs more treatment and irrigation than a typical sports field. Mr. Lasker believes that there needs to be a specialized action plan for seeding the field in order for it to stay healthy. As it was designed, a high performance grass field requires more maintenance and care to be playable.

Ms. Mayer asked if there was a contract pertaining to the fence rental and if the fence could be rented month to month. Mr. Jefferson responded that he can extend the fence rental month to month as needed, but that there would be costs associated in doing so.

Ms. Rothenberg thanked Mr. Lasker for his comments, is hopeful that the field condition will improve in the next year and suggested waiting until more professional information is provided to inform a decision on the fence coming down. Ms. Mayer agreed that she is hopeful that we will have more information in the coming weeks and then can make decisions accordingly.

Members of the public joined the discussion to speak on the grass issues at Robbins Farm. Anthony Vogel stated that he would like the fence to stay up for now. Ms. Backman sent Mr. Jefferson and Ms. Rothenberg

thoughts on the issue shared by members of the Friends of Robbins Farm Park. Ms. Backman is looking forward to hearing the expert's advice and asked if this information could be shared with the Friends. Ms. Mayer responded that any new information will be shared at the next PRC meeting. Mr. Vogel expressed his concern about summer usage and the July 4<sup>th</sup> event. He requested that some consideration be given for high volume usage events, such as concerts and the July 4th celebration with the hope that this year's events will continue. Beth Melofchik shared her idea of having a soft opening of the field at Robbins Farm, which would allow the public to use the field for recreation, but not for sporting events at this time. She requested more information sharing on the status of Robbins Farm and other parks in town, stating that members of the public are perplexed when fields are closed and having information on why would be helpful. Ms. Melofchik closed by thanking the Commission for their efforts.

- Spring Field User Group Schedule

Ms. Mayer gave the update that all Town fields are currently closed until at least May 4<sup>th</sup> due to COVID-19, which will impact the spring field users. Mr. Jefferson provided more information on the spring field user group draft schedule, which Program Supervisor Zachary Vaillette helped prepare. At this time, he is unsure if there will be any spring sports due to the shutdown. With fields such as those at Robbins Farm and Arlington High School being closed (due to construction), the 2020 spring field schedule is tighter than previous years. Mr. Jefferson also indicated that past discussions about changing how field schedules are allocated were not implemented. This spring's planning process was consistent with previous years and no changes were made for a variety of reasons, including staff changes and COVID-19.

Mr. Jefferson will be having a conference call with representatives of all field user groups to talk about possible usage this spring, dependent on the shutdown and proposed that there should be a meeting in fall with field user groups so the new Recreation Director can get ahead of spring 2021 field schedule.

Ms. Rothenberg wanted to have it on the record that she believes this should be a top priority moving forward when a new Recreation Director is hired. Ms. Rothenberg stated that field schedules have been a major issue for quite awhile and we need to make progress.

- Reservoir Update

Ms. Mayer reported that information regarding Phase 1 of the Res project had been sent out to Commissioners by email. The project is waiting on delivery of equipment that was ordered and delayed due to the impacts of COVID-19, which could put the project timeline at risk. Mr. Jefferson confirmed that the hold up with the project is due to the undelivered parts. However, some work is still being done. Mr. Jefferson referred Commissioners to the status emails sent.

Ms. Mayer also reported that RFPs had been sent out for Phase 2 of the project and that (3) responses were received (KZLA, Stantec and Weston & Sampson), which have been sent out to Commissioners via email. There is a tight timeline to review the material and Ms. Mayer requested that all Commissioners review the material and send their questions to Mr. Jefferson and herself by next Friday, so that answers can be obtained. Ms. Mayer suggested that she will work with Mr. Jefferson on a rating sheet and added that doing interviews with each company would extend the timeline on the decision but is possible, if needed. Mr. Jefferson responded that he would reach out to Domenic Lanzillotti of Purchasing regarding the process and informed Commissioners that hard copies of the RFP responses are available, if needed.

Ms. Rothenberg believes interviews are an important part of the process and should be conducted. If the Commission conducts interviews with companies, questions can be answered. Ms. Rothenberg asked if it would be possible to line up interviews with companies and send them their questions ahead of time. Ms. Rothenberg asked what type of questions Commissioners had at this time if any, also stating she was unsure if

members had enough time to review the documents yet. She also requested that the process timeline be moved up to have questions submitted this Friday.

Mr. Lasker responded by agreeing that the Commission has lost time on the project and that the Commission should line up interviews and work on questions. The Commission was hoping to start Phase 2 work this May, and there's a risk the date will get pushed back if there's a delay. With the goal of opening the Reservoir next year with the Phase 2 work substantially complete, Mr. Lasker believes the Commission needs to be urgent with this matter and should be looking to get the project out to bid by this September or October.

Mr. Jefferson suggested that the Commission should pick a date to schedule interviews, and he will coordinate remote interviews with them. This would allow Commissioners to formulate questions and work on the ratings. Ms. Mayer then asked if Commission Members would be ready to complete interviews sometime next week. Ms. Rothenberg proposed that questions can be sent to vendors early next week and that interviews be conducted later in the week. Mr. Walker and Ms. Canniff both agreed with this proposal. Mr. Lasker added that the rating criteria is part of the RFP and that this will help in the review. Ms. Mayer stated that this would be the plan and requested that Mr. Jefferson try to schedule interviews for Thursday, April 23<sup>rd</sup>. All Commissioners agreed and Ms. Mayer requested that questions for vendors be sent to Mr. Jefferson and herself by Tuesday, April 21<sup>st</sup>.

Ms. Mayer updated the Commission on a grant that Emily Sullivan of Conservation has applied for from LWFC (Land and Water Conservation Fund). A decision on the application should be made sometime during the summer of 2020 and funding would be valid through June 30<sup>th</sup>, 2022. Ms. Sullivan requested up to \$306,940.00 in funding, which would have to be matched by Town funding. The LWFC grant would help with current funding needs, as there was an expectation of \$400,000.00 in grants when budgeting for the project. Ms. Mayer also reported that the CPA Committee voted to recommend an additional \$500,000.00 for the project at Town Meeting, and believes that \$350,000.00 has been requested in additional capital funds for the FY2021 fiscal year for Phase 2.

- Permit Requests (On Hold Until At Least May 1, 2020)

Ms. Mayer reported that all permit requests are on hold due to the impacts of COVID-19 until at least May 1<sup>st</sup>, 2020. Mr. Jefferson confirmed this and stated he will follow the lead from both the State and Town on COVID-19, and then will act accordingly with regard to permitting.

Ms. Canniff commented that she wanted to make the point that there will most likely be new regulations relating to crowds moving forward. Things will be different than before and potential crowd regulations may affect activities including summer programming and July 4<sup>th</sup> celebration. Ms. Mayer agreed and noted that many major events in surrounding towns have already been cancelled. Ms. Mayer stated the Commission will hopefully have a better sense of things at the first meeting in May.

- Approval of Minutes (February 24<sup>th</sup>, February 25<sup>th</sup>, and March 10<sup>th</sup>, 2020)

Ms. Mayer transitioned to the approval of minutes for (3) past Commission meetings, February 24<sup>th</sup>, February 25<sup>th</sup>, and March 10<sup>th</sup>. Ms. Mayer requested edits to the February 24<sup>th</sup> meeting minutes, which included the correct spelling of Sarah Carrier's name.

Edits for the February 25<sup>th</sup> and March 10<sup>th</sup> minutes included correcting several grammatical errors and typos. The edits for Feb. 25<sup>th</sup> also included changing the statement regarding the reservoir RFPs. "The company that assisted and drafted the RFP had declined to bid." Ms. Mayer does not know what that refers to but believes it might refer to comments made by Mr. Lasker about someone he spoke with who was interested in bidding. Mr. Jefferson confirmed that this was the bottom paragraph of page 2 and stated that he did not recall this statement as well and suggested it be removed from the minutes.

Ms. Canniff would like to see the specific dates for permit requests added and requested a change to the February 25<sup>th</sup> minutes with regard to updating a statement on page 2, which should state Rink Supervisor and not Recreation Supervisor.

There was confusion regarding which Commission Members made the motions and seconded for adjournment of each of these (3) meetings. The corrections were agreed to.

Ms. Mayer asked for a roll call to vote the approval of the minutes for these (3) meetings, as amended. All (5) Commissioners responded yes, approving the meeting minutes (with pending edits).

- Next Meetings

Ms. Mayer stated the next meeting of the PRC will be on April 23<sup>rd</sup> when remote interviews are conducted with vendors for the Res Phase 2 Design. After that, the next meeting will be on May 5<sup>th</sup>, 2020. Ms. Rothenberg questioned why there would not be a 2<sup>nd</sup> PRC meeting in April, and it was agreed that the interviews on April 23<sup>rd</sup> would be considered the 2<sup>nd</sup> meeting for the month of April with the Commission expected to vote on awarding the contract that evening. Ms. Mayer stated that these interviews by law are open to the public. Ms. Mayer stated that the plan moving forward is to hold meetings on the 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Tuesdays of each month.

- Comments and Items For Future Meetings

Ms. Canniff, Mr. Walker and Ms. Rothenberg thanked Mr. Jefferson for all his help thus far as the Interim Recreation Director and wished for everyone to stay safe.

Mr. Jefferson noted that HR Director, Caryn Malloy, will be continuing the hiring process for a new Recreation Director. The first round interviews will be this week and second round interviews next week. Mr. Jefferson asked Commissioners to send him any specific questions that they would like to be included as interview questions. Ms. Rothenberg requested a copy of the job description for the Recreation Director position, which Mr. Jefferson will send to all Commissioners. She also asked if the Town plans on filling the Assistant Recreation Director position. Mr. Jefferson informed the Commission that the current plan is to wait until a new Recreation Director starts before beginning the hiring process to fill the Assistant Recreation Director position.

Mr. Vaillette commented that the department is in the process of issuing a high amount of credits and refunds for missed and cancelled programs due to COVID-19. With the combined amount for credits/refunds a substantial amount and increasing, it was requested that this topic be added to the next meeting agenda. Mr. Vaillette has concerns relating to the growing amount of credits/refunds in relation to the Recreation Department's budget.

Ms. Canniff motioned to adjourn the meeting at 9:17pm. Motion seconded by Mr. Walker. Motion to adjourn the was approved by Commissioners, 5-0.

The Arlington Park & Recreation Commission Meeting Minutes were respectfully submitted by Program Supervisor, Zachary Vaillette.